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C O N F I D E N T I A L DHAKA 001142

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KCRM](#) [BG](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: ALLEGED KIBRIA KILLER ARRESTED WITH THREE  
ACCOMPLICES

REF: A. DHAKA 0906

[1](#)B. DHAKA 0810

Classified By: P/E Counselor D.C. McCullough, reason 1.4 d

[1](#)1. (SBU) On March 9, police formally arrested four persons in connection with the January 27 murder of former Awami League finance minister Shah AMS Kibria according to local press reports and other sources. The chief suspect is AKM Abdul Qayyum, a BNP leader in Habiganj, where Kibria was killed. The three other suspects -- M. Jamin Ali, Zainal Abedin Momin, and Tajul Islam -- reportedly confessed to their involvement with the grenade attack and provided the names of other accomplices.

[1](#)2. (C) On March 14, Nazli Kibria, daughter of the slain AL leader, told us that her family is "not satisfied" with the arrests, noting that the prime suspect, Qayyum, did not make a confession in front of the magistrate as did the three other accused. Even if Qayyum confessed, she said, he is only the grenade thrower. She identified GK Gaus, general secretary of the district BNP, as the probable instigator of

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the attack. According to Kibria, Gaus was in London at the time of the attack, but was arrested during Operation Clean Heart in 2002 after he was found with a stockpile of weapons; however, he was released on the order of Finance Minister, and Sylheti, Saifur Rahman.

[1](#)3. (C) Qayyum, Ali, and Momin were included in the list of six detained suspects provided to us by the BDG on February 10 (ref a). Islam was not. On the list, there is no mention of Qayyum's BNP affiliation. He was detained, it said, because "He was found to be very ambitious and his movement in the area before and after the occurrence was very suspicious."

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: The Kibria case has taken several strange turns. Perhaps bending to strong international and domestic pressure, the BDG may have decided it has to "solve" the case, but whether these suspects are tried, much less convicted, before the next election is another matter. It is notable, though, that the Kibria family is not saying that the BDG has simply rounded up the usual suspects; its focus is instead on arguing, logically, that others complicit in the attack are yet to be caught. Also notable is that senior BDG officials have moved from initially suggesting the attack was an internal Awami League dispute to blaming local BNP officials who they insist acted without the knowledge or concurrence of national BNP leaders. Nevertheless, speculation, apparently endorsed by PMO Principal Secretary Siddiqui (septel), is building that PMO Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury is tied to and has protected Qayyum. The subdued follow-up press reporting on the arrests is also peculiar, given the sensational nature of the case. The BDG may be pressuring the press to downplay the story, or the muted response among Bangladeshis in general may reflect their cynicism that the BDG has actually broken the mold and arrested the "right" people. If the BDG's position becomes that it has solved the case, it is unclear if it will drop its request for FBI help in the investigation.

THOMAS